

MODULE 3

SUPPORTING PROTÉGÉS IN CHANGING PRACTICE

To the young child, all adults are leaders and have the power, authority, and status to change the world.

—D. R. Sullivan (2003)

CONTEXT

Mentor-Coaches adopt many roles with protégés, including guide, role model, confidante, leader, and colleague. The purpose of this presentation is to help you to clarify the roles and responsibilities in a mentor-coaching relationship, so that the relationship is firmly established as you and your protégés go through the process of change.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completing this module, you will:

- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Mentor-Coaches and protégés in transforming and improving your professional skills
- Relate understanding of one theory about the stages and process of change to your work with protégés
- Prepare to develop a Mentor-Coaching Contract with a protégé
- Apply knowledge gained to your Professional Development Plan.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

Change is a multistep process that begins the moment we are born and continues for the rest of our lives. Many adult education specialists agree that change happens in stages. Whether learners move quickly or hesitantly through the stages of change, with diligence they can and do achieve professional transformations that improve their skills and practices.

This module begins by clarifying the roles of Mentor-Coaches and protégés, first noted in Module 1. Once Mentor-Coaches and protégés agree on expectations, they are more fully prepared to embark on processes of change to promote positive early literacy and language outcomes in children.

This module introduces the theory of change process model developed by researchers James Prochaska, John Norcross, and Carlo DiClemente (1994). This module adapts the theory by using a vignette of a journey taken by a Mentor-Coach and protégé. Together they plan how to include small group activities into an existing classroom routine.



REVISITING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN A MENTOR-COACHING RELATIONSHIP

In Module 1 of Unit 1, you learned that Mentor-Coaches adopt a multitude of roles in their relationships with protégés. Mentor-Coaches are role models, guides, confidantes, allies, leaders, colleagues, and supporters who work to build trusting, responsible relationships with protégés. In addition, as a Mentor-Coach, you are:

- Skilled in your craft
- Knowledgeable about and experienced with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
- Knowledgeable about and experienced with age-appropriate instructional practices for developing early literacy and language abilities for children from birth to age five
- Creative in solving problems
- Able to reflect on your practice
- Resourceful
- Flexible in relating to other adults
- Ready to learn new information
- Willing to take risks in order to grow.

You also learned that protégés, as participants in this relationship, have a set of roles and responsibilities to fulfill. First, they are learners—willing to learn new skills and reflect on practices with others and enhance children’s learning and literacy skills and accomplishments. And, like Mentor-Coaches, protégés are ready to learn and grow to become more effective in their teaching practices for young children.

Mentor-Coaches and protégés have roles and responsibilities to fulfill in mentor-coaching relationships and practices with children, families, and each other. Below are some examples of what Mentor-Coaches and protégés do.

What Mentor-Coaches Can Do:

- Share information about program procedures, guidelines, and expectations.
- Link protégés to appropriate resources.
- Share culturally sensitive teaching strategies about early childhood education.
- Offer support by listening and by sharing their own experiences.
- Give guidance and ideas for helping children make progress on the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework literacy skills indicators.
- Assist protégés to arrange, organize, and analyze the classroom or home physical setting.
- Invite protégés to observe them and then discuss what was observed.
- Encourage protégés to assess children's progress in literacy.
- Encourage protégés to be self-reflective about their own career goals.
- Model professionalism (such as a good working relationship with peers, and continuing professional development).

What Protégés Can Do:

- Assess their learning needs.
- Participate in training sessions, professional dialogues, and seminars on topics related to those needs.
- Listen carefully and seek to learn more from Mentor-Coaches.
- Ask questions and be willing to try again when needed.
- Observe mentors and other colleagues to expand their caregiving and educational practices in supporting children's literacy skills, development, and individualized learning.

Identify any additional roles and responsibilities that may relate to your work with your protégés.

DEVELOPING A MENTOR-COACHING CONTRACT

Mentor-Coaches and protégés should agree to a Mentor-Coaching Contract which outlines the expectations for the mentor-coaching relationship. Usually the contract is initiated by the Mentor-Coach. When devising your Mentor-Coaching Contract, begin by brainstorming expectations with your protégé.

SAMPLE EXPECTATIONS

As partners in the Mentor-Coach and protégé relationship, we:

- Value each other's perspectives and ideas, understanding that we may differ
- Set schedules and meet once a week
- Share and discuss resources and ways to support and assess children's progress based on the literacy indicators listed in the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework
- Help to solve problems together that arise with children, families, and staff
- Engage in reflective conferences once a month to assess progress in helping children to develop literacy and language skills
- Maintain confidentiality
- Identify children's progress along the way
- Clarify roles whenever needed
- Listen and speak respectfully.

1. What are some other expectations to include in a Mentor-Coaching Contract?

2. What might your protégé want to include in the contract?

The following is a SAMPLE Mentor-Coaching Contract:

The Mentor-Coach agrees to:

Develop individualized mentoring plans for the protégé to include early literacy-related goals, improved child outcomes, and steps for achieving goals.

Engage the protégé in ongoing evaluation of progress toward his or her professional development and classroom goals.

Schedule and facilitate two visits a month with protégé (each visit to be a minimum of two hours). Incorporate observation and conferences into visits. Model early-literacy teaching practices and co-teaching methods with protégé during each visit.

Support protégé's progress toward his or her goals by sharing resources, collaborative planning, and using journals to record and think about experiences.

Respect the value of the protégé's time; keep appointments and start and end on time.

Keep work with protégé confidential. Mentor-Coach never shares stories about the protégé's work or struggles with others. Mentor-Coach must have the protégé's permission to share stories of successful work.

The protégé agrees to:

Work in partnership with the Mentor-Coach to set goals and make plans to achieve them.

Arrange availability for two visits with Mentor-Coach monthly.

Follow-up on planned and agreed upon responsibilities in a timely way.

Contribute to ongoing evaluation of progress toward goals.

I have read the Mentor-Coaching Contract. I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the responsibilities that are described in the agreement. I understand my responsibilities as a Mentor-Coach or protégé.

Signature—Mentor-Coach

Date

Signature—Protégé

Date

THOUGHTS ABOUT CHANGE AND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

Change is a process that takes time, not a single event.

—D. Bellm, M. Whitebook, and P. Hnatiuk (1997)

Change is one of the few certainties in life. While change is challenging, as anyone who has made changes in life knows, the process is often gradual and ongoing. Change is a journey with many detours and rest stops along the way. At times, trial and error is the best choice. At other times, the experiences of others set the example.

Both going forward and occasionally taking steps backward to review and re-energize are part of the process. The challenge is to stay on the path, using each trial and accomplishment to fuel movement and progress toward reaching the goal. Whether deciding to make a positive change in one's own life or supporting change in someone else's, the effort and investment of time is worth it.

Keep in mind that change:

- Is an inevitable, necessary process
- Occurs in individuals, organizations, and societies
- Can be anticipated and planned
- Is a highly emotional process and can cause stress and tension
- Is resisted by many people
- Can be easier with the support of a leader or mentor
- Entails developmental growth in attitudes, skills, and procedures
- Is best facilitated on the basis of diagnosed needs.

—Jillian Rodd (1998)

Reflect and make a few notes about what change means to you (professional change or personal change):

THE FIVE STAGES OF CHANGE PROCESS

Read and consider the following theory of change, adapted from Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente (1994).

STAGE 1: Not Ready to Change

In the first stage, protégés may resist the idea that any change in their current practice is necessary. At this stage, Mentor-Coaches' guidance and patience are important. They provide resources and help protégés to think and talk about their experiences and practice. Together, the Mentor-Coach and protégé team addresses factors that may stand in the way of their readiness or ability to identify areas where change is needed.

***Protégé:** I have been teaching Book Knowledge and Appreciation and Print Awareness Concepts for many more years than my Mentor-Coach. I attend all of the Head Start trainings and take college courses. I intentionally implement all of the activities I learn there, putting in a lot of time and energy on my own. I do not need to make any more changes.*

STAGE 2: Thinking about Change

Protégés begin to accept the idea that their practices may benefit from some changes, communicate that to their Mentor-Coaches, but do not take action. At this stage, Mentor-Coaches help protégés understand how identified changes can strengthen their practices and make outcomes more positive for children.

As my Mentor-Coach and I talk about the books and other print matter in my classroom, I realize I am presenting the materials and activities but am not really looking at the progress that the individual children are making. I thought that as long as the activities came from accepted sources, the children would learn about books and printed material. I still do not see the need to change what I am doing, since I think I am using good teaching practices.

STAGE 3: Getting Ready to Change

Protégés begin to discuss ideas for making changes in their teaching practices. Reflective inquiry and shared goal-setting are important strategies for the Mentor-Coach and protégé relationship at this stage.

As I listen to my Mentor-Coach's comments about the way children interact with books and other printed materials in my class, I think more about their experiences. I realize that some children are not paying attention; others are watching peers in order to know how to respond. My Mentor-Coach suggests that I focus on the children who are not paying attention. I watch and think

about the children. I know they are not achieving at the high levels that I expect. I want to reach them more fully and successfully.

STAGE 4: Changing

Change takes time, energy, and a willingness to try again. Mentor-Coaches help protégés meet goals through reflective conferences, observation, feedback, modeling, and providing resources.

My first real commitment to change comes when my Mentor-Coach demonstrates how to use storybooks and printed materials in different ways with the children. I watch the children. My Mentor-Coach uses some interesting methods to gain children's attention and provides visual cues—in using things like puppets, big books, and dramatic play—for children who usually watch peers.

I still have a long way to go before I will feel comfortable with the changes I am trying in literacy. I like my teaching style to feel like a second skin, being so comfortable that I can move easily within it. My Mentor-Coach will provide more feedback and resources for me. I know I can trust her responses. Both she and I know my children's needs for learning better than ever.

STAGE 5: Maintaining Change

To maintain change, Mentor-Coaches recognize and celebrate protégés' achievements and maintain ongoing support and communication with them.

I now feel ready to share what I have learned with others. Now when I attend Head Start workshops, I have suggestions to make about teaching literacy skills. I attend conferences at least once a year. I read the Head Start Bulletin to look for more information about ways to use books in my learning centers and regularly check the Internet for information about fostering the development of literacy for all young children, including English-language learners, since I have five children from five different countries in my class.

My Mentor-Coach and I still meet, and we still arrange classroom observations and model lessons. But, more often, we talk about outcomes and strategies for meeting each child's needs and for deciding how to assess and challenge every child. She has appreciated my ability to grow and to help children achieve the outcomes we planned for them. It makes me more confident and sure of myself and my practices with children.

EXERCISE 1: SELF-REFLECTION ON THE FIVE STAGES OF CHANGE PROCESS

Questions for Reflection

Think about a time in your life when you had to make a major change.

1. What was the situation?

2. What were your responses?

3. Which of the five stages of change were relevant to your experience?

4. What were the outcomes?

5. What personal and professional growth did you experience?

Now that you have considered a theory of change as it relates to your own experience, you will be reading the vignette: **A Protégé's Story of Making Change.**

EXERCISE 2: VIGNETTE—A PROTÉGÉ'S STORY OF MAKING CHANGE

Integrating More Small Group Time into Classroom Activities

I recently attended a training workshop about the five guidelines for teaching teams in Head Start programs. I really got to thinking about how the guidelines tie together. Although my co-teacher, Maria, and I touch on all of the guidelines, I thought that we might not be as intentional in using them as the guidelines recommend. Two guidelines stood out for me:

- Plan carefully and intentionally in interacting with children and creating learning experiences.
- Regularly engage children in focused, small group experiences to promote thinking processes and concept learning.

I have worked with small groups in other settings. Since I am new to this classroom of twenty children, I have not done much small group activity here. Maria has been in the program for many years, and I have learned a lot from her. We have our routines, and they work pretty well.

During a conference with my Mentor-Coach, I mentioned that I was inspired by the ideas from the workshop. I told him about the two guidelines that appealed to me the most. I also expressed my concern about presenting them to my more-experienced co-teacher. We decided to choose one guideline to start. After talking about the children in the room, their needs, and our goal of having all children making progress, as gauged by the assessment tool we devised from our review of the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, we chose to engage the children in small groups.

I felt pretty sure that Maria would be open to some changes. She has been receptive to new activities and materials that I have shared. However, this seemed like a bigger change, since it involved a new way of looking at the organization of the classroom, itself. We agreed to start with a three-way team meeting to discuss my suggestions for making extra time for small group activities with reasons why I felt they were worthwhile. We also agreed to discuss how to manage the changes. I was nervous at first, since I took the lead in the meeting. Having my Mentor-Coach there to listen gave me confidence to make the case.

At the beginning Maria's responses were "Yes, but." As I brought up more concrete examples of what I would do and shared some of the handouts from the workshop, she smiled and said she would give it a try. We agreed that it might not be easy at first to restructure our schedule and for children to adapt to new routines. We decided to implement the changes gradually. By phasing in more time for working in small groups, we could monitor how we were doing and make careful adjustments as we saw the need.

I am happy to report that it has worked out quite well so far. Maria was ambivalent at times, and so was I! After several attempts and support from my Mentor-Coach, we felt ourselves becoming more committed to the change.

I realize that it is worthwhile to plan carefully to introduce key ideas in small groups. We find the children are more actively involved. We can support individual children who are having difficulties more readily. We rely on my Mentor-Coach to provide observational feedback, support, and resources. What at first seemed to be a big change now seems like something our classroom needed in order to grow. Both Maria and I are enjoying our teaching more. The children are happier in their learning environment. It has been a win-win decision!

For further information on the five guidelines for teaching teams in Head Start programs, see Chapter IV, “Seeing the Big Picture in Head Start” (pp.19–27), in *The Head Start Leader’s Guide to Positive Child Outcomes* (September, 2003).



Discussion Questions

1. What are some methods that you can use to assess what stage a protégé has reached in the process of change?

2. What are some ways that you can support protégés as they move through a process of change?

3. What are some culturally sensitive approaches that you can use to support protégés who are English-language learners in the process of change?

4. What are some of the issues you face with a protégé that are unrelated to curriculum content or classroom changes? How will you address them?

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Go back to your Professional Development Plan to record your own progress and decide on next steps.

- How do your professional development goals relate to where you are in the change process?

- Do you need to modify your mentor-coaching skills to enhance your relationship with your protégé or to support your protégé in the change process?

- Now that you have had time to reflect on the roles and responsibilities, as well as the process of change, do you need to modify your professional development plan in any way?

WRAP-UP

- Continue on to Unit 1, Module 4, which you will complete without a facilitator.
- Complete Module 1 in Unit 2, the Self-Assessment, and the accompanying Professional Development Plan.
- Note the date and location of your next facilitated session (Unit 2, Module 2).

Remember:

Do not hesitate to call the **STEP-Line** and log on to **STEP-Net**. **Steps to Success** is a network, and Mentor-Coaches can count on each other for support, resources, and strategies for success!